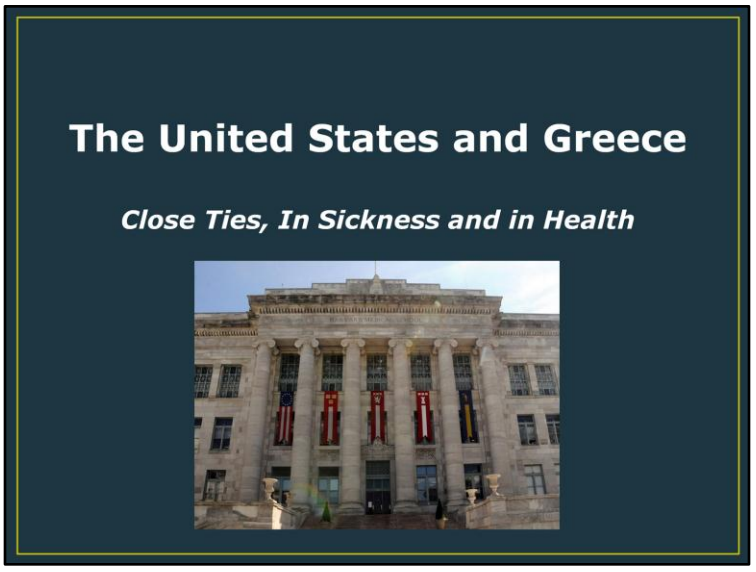
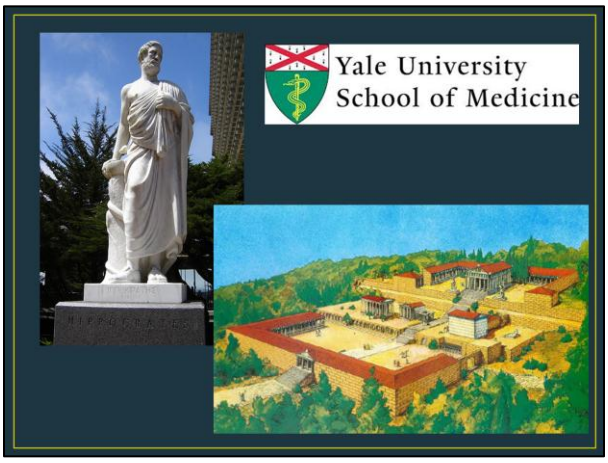


Good evening and thank you for the kind invitation to speak tonight to such a distinguished group.

I met Dr. Linos, a picture of whose alma mater I've put in the first slide - and Athena, a great role model for Greek girls as we celebrate International Women's Day – soon after I arrived in Greece a year and a half ago. I've met a few more of you since then, so I' d like to begin by thanking you for your help to the Embassy community over the years. We have benefited enormously from your professionalism, kindness, and high standard of care.

With most groups it is clear what kind of presentation is the right one. But with this group tonight there are many different possible directions to take -- the evolution of medicine and provision of health care in the US, where you have all studied, or the role of technology, and the rapid development of medical devices or the US model of education, which is changing rapidly. Student debt, which I don't have to tell any of you about, and the growth of the web as a tool for teaching are radically reworking the way students learn at the secondary and tertiary levels.

I'd like to touch on those issues, but want to appeal mainly to you as citizens and residents of Greece at this moment, and say a few things about how I see the relationship of our two countries now. I'll try to refer back to health issues, as they provide a nice touchstone for a lot of the changes happening now in both our countries.



I'm a lifelong Classics buff, and am just back from Asclepios's hometown of ancient Trikki, now called Trikala. So please indulge me if I start way back.

Even people who aren't doctors know of the Hippocratic Oath. The world owes an enormous debt to Asclepios, to Hippocrates, and to all of the early physicians of the Hellenic world.

On the bottom right you see an artist's rendering of the Asclepion on Kos, home of Hippocrates, in its Hellenistic and Roman heyday. Patients visited this place not just to pray their illnesses away - you could do that at any shrine - but to get surgery, often while under sedation. Examination, Testing, Diagnosis, Treatment, and maybe Cure. And if not cure, then amelioration. Though techniques have changed, many of the steps along the way seem awfully familiar to anyone who's been treated for an illness.

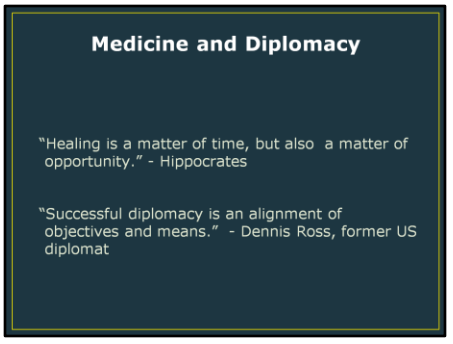
Today's medical schools understand the debt owed to the creators of ancient medicine. I've put the Yale logo up here, not just to pacify anyone annoyed by the crimson tone of the previous slide, but to show how they've put the Rod

of Asclepios on their shield.

On the left, some of you will recognize the statue of Hippocrates at UCSF, the University of California San Francisco. UCSF, which focuses on graduate degrees in medicine and which is one of the country's finest schools and research facilities - do we have anyone here from there? It's been a leader in the fight against HIV, and faculty have made enormous advances in internal medicine too. UCSF's main campus is even located in a district of San Francisco called "Parnassos," so the school embraces Asclepios, Hippocrates, and Apollo.

Back to Greece -- here is Asclepios in his hometown. This is actually from last week, when I visited Trikala and met with Mayor Papastergiou, who took me around town. It is worth noting that the statue is situated on a bridge above the River Lethe, the river of forgetting -- maybe a reminder of why you all have to keep getting recertified and be retrained every couple years.

Again, here you can see the snake in Asclepios's left arm, and a modern iteration of it –on the right- in the symbol for emergency medical personnel in the US. One of my guides in Trikala told me snakes and snake venom may have been part of Asclepios's early experimentation and search for cures. Non-venomous snakes also were used in healing rituals, and I was told there had been a serpent house in the Asclepion in Trikki, which is the oldest such sanctuary in Greece.



Next, I want to make a case for some similarities between what I do and what you do.

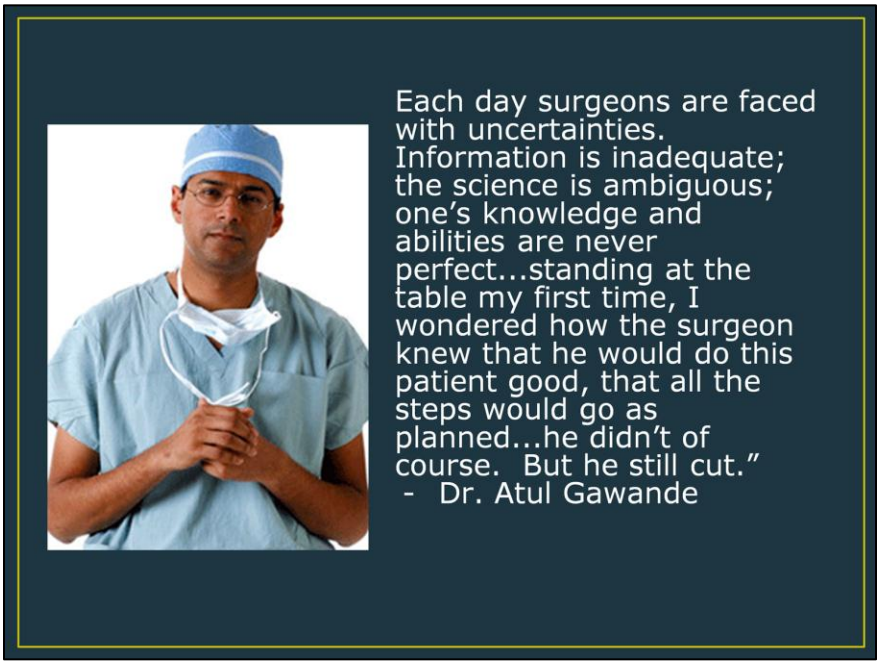
Take a look at these two quotes, one from Hippocrates and another from veteran US Middle East negotiator Dennis Ross.

When I read what hippocrates wrote about medicine, and about what contemporary doctors like Atul Gawande and Irving Yalom say about their work today, I recognize much that applies to my own work. Of course, no one is going to run to me with an embolism or a unipolar depression or a case of Q Fever. What you do is often a matter of life and death. And there is a degree more exactitude in surgery than there is in diplomacy.

Nevertheless, when I reflect on my 30 plus years as a diplomat, having served in Algeria, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and other countries, I do see some similarities. Both fields require a certain professional detachment from one's own preoccupations and biases, to be able to see opportunities for resolution, even at the most unpromising of times. In both fields, every case is different, and the case changes by the day. What worked on Stelios might not work on

Maria, what worked in Timor may not in the Democratic Republic of Congo. That blur on the scan might be nothing or it might be something. That report of intercommunal violence in western Burma may be false or hyped. Or it may be something, that leads to a bigger something. How do you, as a diplomat, diagnose the situation, knowing that you don't have all the information and that what you do have may not be completely true?

The doctor and the diplomat both need to listen. As much as possible we each need to be alert to our own prejudices and correct them. As hippocrates wrote, it's a matter of opportunity. But first you need to recognize that opportunity when you see it.



Many of you know the work of Dr. Atul Gawande, the New Yorker writer and Boston surgeon who has written so eloquently about medicine, care, and, in his most recent book, how we die. This quote, about his training as a surgeon, stuck out as one that resonates with a lot of the work my colleagues have done over the years.

"Each day surgeons are faced with uncertainties. Information is inadequate; the science is ambiguous; one's knowledge and abilities are never perfect...standing at the table my first time, I wondered how the surgeon knew that he would do this patient good, that all the steps would go as planned... he didn't of course. But he still cut."

In the same way there is never, for example, a perfect time to start a negotiation, or get a deal signed. Coalition building is messy, unpredictable, and full of reversals.

Even things that look easy aren't: when I was in Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War, and helping stitch together the coalition to get Saddam Hussein out

of Kuwait, there were many, many problems getting people to work together. The most promising negotiations can collapse, seemingly over nothing. On the other hand, situations that look intractable can, for no obvious reason, suddenly become unknotted. Was it something we did, was it something we didn't do?

So doctors and diplomats both need to recognize and exploit "opportunity" -- or in Greek "efkairia" -- when they see it.

As I move into the next portion of this talk, I would like to look at how this dynamic relates what I see here and now in Athens. It's the same challenge hippocrates mentioned in the quote I showed a few minutes ago. Finding the right opportunity in the right time.

When I go around Greece and meet with people, or talk to Greek friends, or politicians across the spectrum, that word "opportunity" keeps cropping up. A mayor tells me young people are leaving his city and even the country in droves due to lack of opportunity. The engineering grad takes a job beneath her abilities because there isn't an opportunity get work in her field. Lack of access to capital - no opportunity to get a loan - means the three video game designers can't get their product to market. In the last election, each side argued in its ads that they would bring more opportunities to a people starved for them.

On the other hand we also see examples of Greeks ably exploiting the opportunities that are out there. This isn't new, of course - in this slide I have a photo of the Liberty ships, which were built quickly during WWII, and after the end of the war snapped up by Greek shipping families for a song. The surplus ships were not scrap but an opportunity, for those who would see it – They became the basis of the fleets run by Onassis, Niarchos, Livanos. and other successful Greek shipping firms.

Taking advantage of opportunities has often entailed going overseas, if not forever then for a while. I have. And all of you have spent significant time in the United States to train as doctors. One of the best pathologists of modern times was a Greek, Dr. George Papanikolaou, who created the eponymous test -- the pap smear -- that has saved the lives of an untold number of women who otherwise would have died of cervical cancer. The United States, and Cornell in particular, gave Dr. Papanikolaou the opportunity to research and market his creation, and his invention gave millions of women the opportunity to live. Here you can see him in his lab, a picture later adapted by the US postal service for the stamp in his honor.

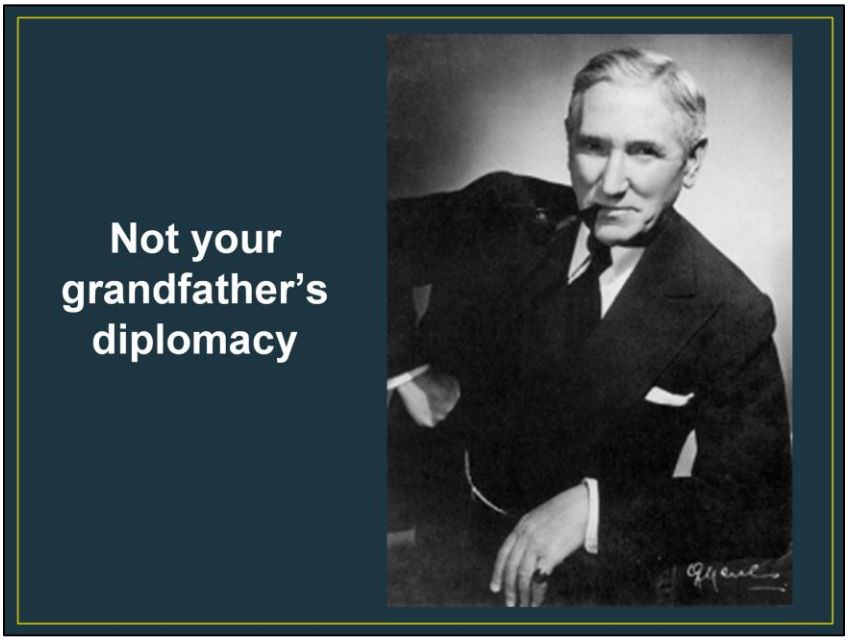
Because March is a big month for basketball in the US, I also want to include another Papanikolaou here, Costas Papanikolaou of Trikala. His presence is an opportunity for the Houston Rockets to win more games. That's him on the left, of course. He doesn't have a stamp yet, but one day he may.

But it isn't that necessary to leave the country in search of opportunity. Take a look at what the hoteliers, event planners, and caterers of Santorini have done. The tourism industry on the island has been so successful in marketing itself to Chinese newlyweds that even in April it can be difficult to find a room. In this photo from Shanghai Daily, you can see a Chinese bride on the lip of the caldera. This whole market didn't exist on the island ten years ago: it came into being because of a savvy play by local business. They spied an opportunity and they took it.

In another industry, the Markopoulos-based Apivita has grown quickly and increased the size of its Athens factory staff by 50% over the last few years. The firm's streamlined business practices and export-driven model are what Greek businesses need to focus on if there are going to be enough new jobs to make a dent in the 26% unemployment rate. Apivita saw the organic cosmetics market was growing fast, especially in Asia, and developed their own niche in it.

Tapely is a Greek app that makes a mixtape from YouTube, Soundcloud,

Spotify, and the music in your personal collection, with artwork you can customize. The reason I know about Tapely, in case you think the US ambassador is sitting around making mixtapes from his collection of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young and Rihanna remixes from YouTube, is mainly because my staff told me – but it also gets me to my next point.



Things have changed. This is one of my predecessors, the extraordinary Amb. Lincoln MacVeagh. A graduate of Groton prep school, Harvard and the Sorbonne, MacVeagh was appointed to Athens in the 1930s by Franklin Roosevelt. After presenting his credentials, MacVeagh gave a speech in flawless ancient Greek. He was an enthusiastic charity supporter – and fundraiser for- excavation up north at Amphipolis. Despite the debonair look in this photo, he was ambassador to Greece in traumatic times: he was appointed by Roosevelt before the war, and served until several months after the Germans had occupied Athens.

During the War he was posted in South Africa, and later to Cairo. After Liberation, he returned to Athens from South Africa, where he'd been ambassador, and was here for the first few years of the civil war. MacVeagh's testimony to Congress - secret at the time - convinced Congressional leaders to support President Truman's containment doctrine, and resulted in huge amounts of US military and financial support for a Greek regime struggling to re-establish itself.

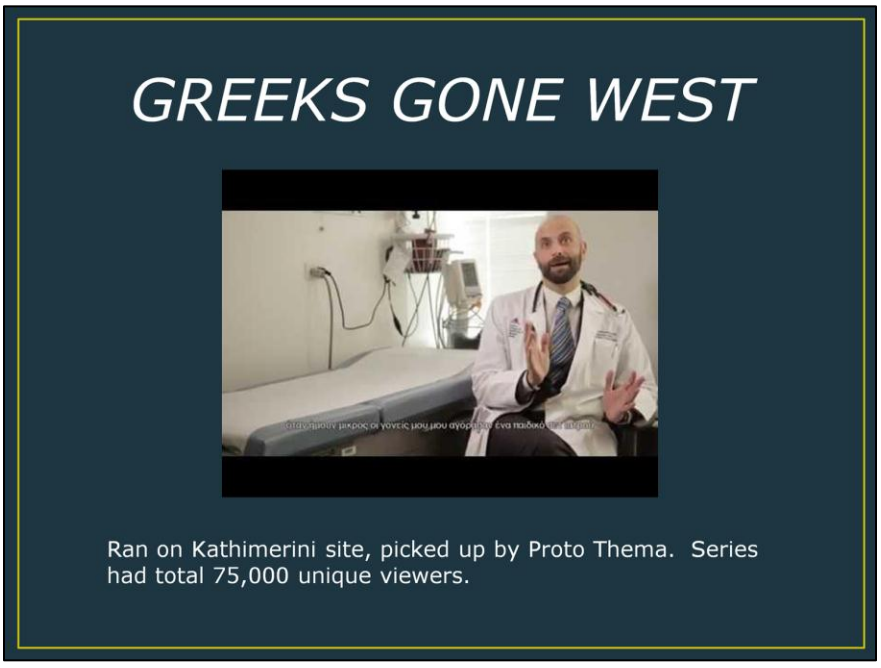
But despite all of the difficulties he faced - war, and just getting around - the Attiki Odos would not be built until decades after his death - Ambassador Mac Veagh did not have to worry about interacting with the public to the same degree that we do today. Technology didn't play the same role as now. He did not have to worry about this:

Twitter. And Facebook, and the 24 hour news cycle, and instant communication back and forth with Washington and Brussels and New York, and cheaper air travel that makes going back and forth to home capitals easy if not always comfortable.

And it was a historic period - for Greece and for US-Greece relations. The ambassador then would meet with ministers, report back to Washington on what was happening, perhaps occasionally talk to an American reporter, but there was no email, and comparatively few long distance calls, except over "trunk" lines that were always breaking up. The main method of communication was diplomatic telegrams back and forth.

Now, however, technology has changed not just how we do but what we do in diplomacy.. This is, no doubt, familiar in your world. I am sure you are all delighted when patients walk in ready to assist you in your diagnosis with a little bit of expertise gleaned from WebMD under their belt. The old tradition in foreign policy - or perhaps even a medical - elite has crumbled, for good and for bad, and there's a new level of participation and engagement. So I

want to talk about what that new diplomatic engagement looks like here, how we at the US Embassy in Athens engage in the world around us. How we try to exploit those new opportunities.



It's no secret that the United States has had a popularity problem in Greece, during the past years. You look at the Pew Global Survey and while the numbers of people in Greece with favorable views of the US are rising, they're still quite low compared to numbers you see in Germany, Italy, and France, not to mention the countries of the former Eastern bloc. A sizeable segment of the Greek public, when it comes to the US, is generally skeptical and doesn't see a lot in common with us.

Obviously, I don't agree with this view, because our countries have long been friends and allies and still have a lot to learn from one another. A lot of the public diplomacy we do goes beyond simply arguing for US policy positions on security, trade, and issues like Syria, Russia, and Iran. A big part of work is correcting what we see as misunderstandings of what life in the US is like, and advertising the usefulness of some US models and ideas as Greece reimagines and reinvents itself.

Here's an example of a recent program that's kind of a new wave American studies seminar. For last year's video series Greeks Gone West, we profiled 23

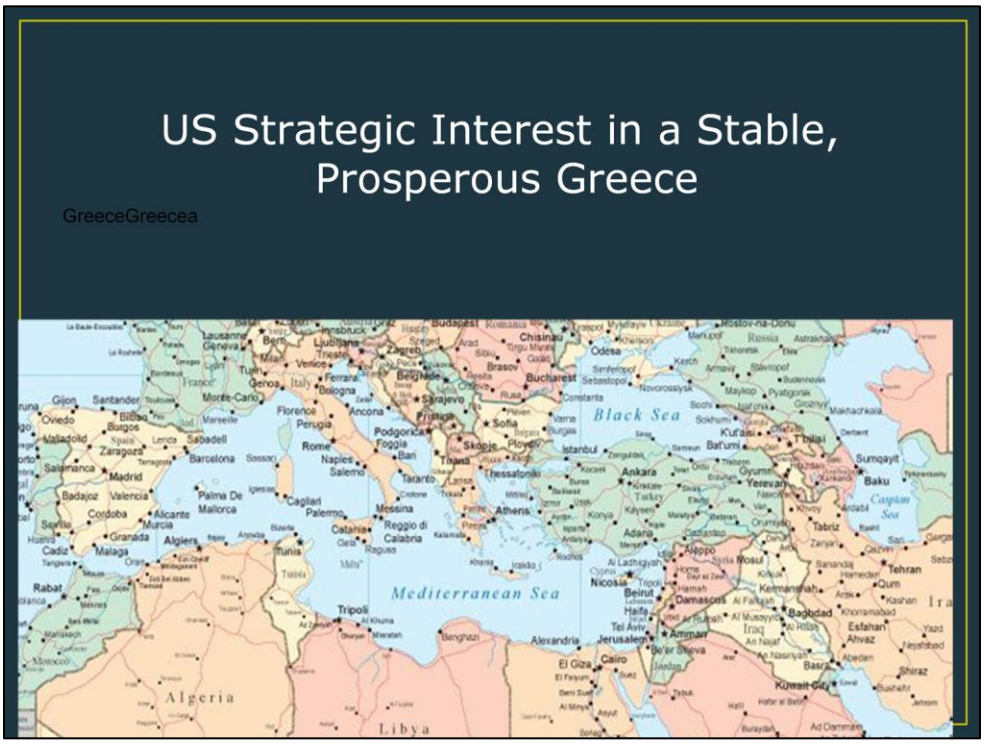
people of Greek origin as a way of painting different corners of the world of work in the US. Dr. Dimitris Daskalakis of Mt. Sinai - any Mt. Sinai alums out there? - is an infectious disease specialist who focuses on HIV. Let's watch the three minute segment, which was one of the best.

But as I said before, and I want to stress with this crowd, given the number of Greek doctors who have gone to other European countries since 2008, it's not just Greeks going out. It's also Americans coming in.

One of those coming in repeatedly has been Professor Michael Goldberg, a venture capitalist who is based at Case Western Reserve in Cleveland, Ohio. Michael led a Massive Open Online Course on the Coursera platform last year. It was about Entrepreneurship in Transitioning Economies. He had over 20K students registered worldwide, and three thousand of them were from Greece. The Embassy worked with Michael, a local filmmaker and ALBA business school to create videos about the course themes. The videos addressed the experiences of Greek entrepreneurs seeking funding, better marketing skills, and greater cooperation with overseas partners. Those videos were the basis for six meet-ups we held around the country so students could network and discuss the issues that came up in class. In this shot you can see Michael at the Stoa of Attalos, in the Agora, where he delivered the final course lecture. It was live streamed to participants around the world.

Michael made terrific connections in Athens and Salonica while he was here

this summer, and last week came back to give a talk at TEDxIraklion. And together with our partners at ALBA we are tracking the progress of entrepreneurs who took the course and are applying what they learned in their daily work lives. Meanwhile we continue to work with Greek schools and enterprises on new online courses that can meet the needs of people seeking to start or grow a business.



Needless to say, the traditional work of diplomacy also continues.

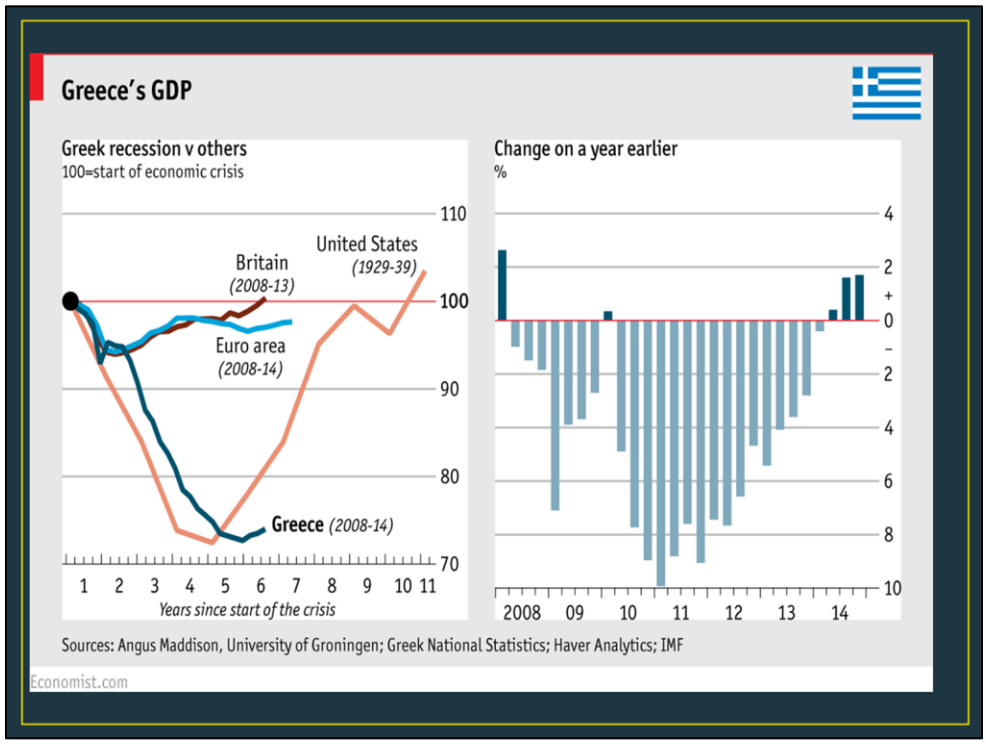
Look around Greece on the map above. Russian aggression continues to destabilize Ukraine. Syria remains mired in civil war that seems to have no end. ISIS controls a large swath of both Syria and Iraq. Extremist violence and a political crisis continue in Libya. Illegal migration from the Middle East and North Africa puts an increasing burden on an already overwhelmed Greek state.

So what happens in Greece matters - not just for Greece but for the broader region, Europe and international peace and security.

That means that even in the age of new diplomatic methods and Twitter views there is still no substitute for direct, personal contact when it comes to government to government relations. Still happen, still necessary. Here a few recent meetings - Treasury Secretary Lew met with former Finance Minister and now Bank of Greece governor Stournaras. That's me with the Prime Minister a couple weeks ago at the Maximou. In 2013 we had Commerce Secretary Pritzker come -- the first Commerce Secretary to come to Athens in over 20 years, to talk about both the challenges and the possibilities for US companies that have invested, or might invest, in Greece.

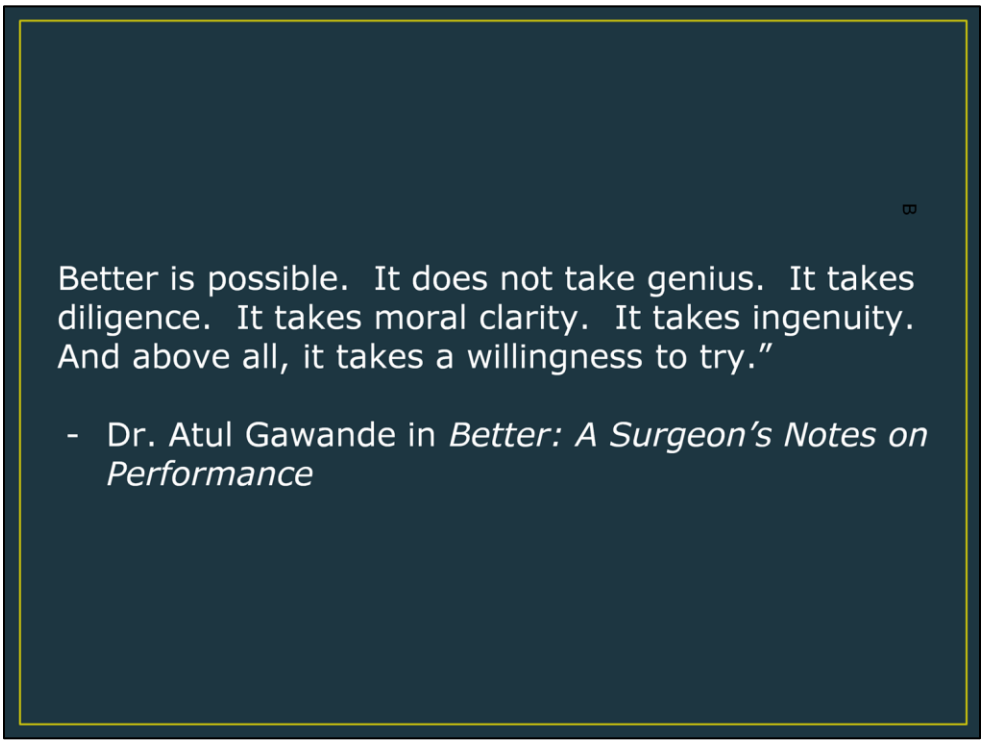
Prime Minister Tsipras has said he wants a more growth-oriented strategy and I look forward to seeing the government's developing strategy to make the country more hospitable to investment - including US firms who might like to open here. Austerity alone is not enough – you need growth and jobs in order to restore hope. But for growth and jobs you need investments – and for investments a country needs to have the right conditions. To create these conditions you need reforms. Obviously, for those US and other firms, that means a reasonable and consistent tax code, a flexible labor market, a more

efficient judicial system, and less red tape. We also look forward to finding out what the new government will be planning to increase opportunities - in education and in work - for those currently stymied by a system that is generally seen as too regulated and susceptible to clientelism.



No matter if we are working with the government or with private groups, the key again is opportunity. We want to see Greece get its groove back. This chart, from the Economist, is particularly affecting for Americans like me who grew up with family stories of the Great Depression. The one on the left shows the contraction of the US economy in the Great Depression and that of Greece from 2008-14. It is pretty devastating. As doctors, you see this misery every day: you don't just hear about it, or see it in the struggles your patients have to pay your bills, but you see how the stress brought up by a collapsing economy can manifest itself in the body.

However, the second chart shows that opportunity may be coming back, albeit at a slow rate and in a shaky, fragile way. I hope so. Our goal is to help a more prosperous, stable Greece emerge from the current crisis stronger, and stable, and playing a stabilizing role in the region. That's the US interest. This isn't for sentimental reasons, or because of our longstanding ties, or the large Greek-American population, but because, as I said before – what happens here matters – not just for Greece, but for the wider region, and for the international peace and security.



I'd like to end with another quote from Dr. Gawande:

"Better is possible. It does not take genius. It takes diligence. It takes moral clarity. It takes ingenuity. And above all, it takes a willingness to try."

I think this is the spirit that gets so many doctors, and diplomats, out of bed in the morning. I think it also speaks to the efforts of millions of Greeks who are trying to reconstruct their society, remake it in a way that is less bureaucratic and more open, more flexible, more flush with opportunity.

Hippocrates told us healing is a matter of time, and opportunity. The opportunities are there. We just need to be sure we recognize them – and then let the healing begin.

Thank you.

Thank you

U.S. EMBASSY
ATHENS

@DavidDPearce